



WORKPLACE SAFETY AND HEALTH IN MAINE

*From The
National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health*



State Profile 2002

*Delivering on the Nation's promise:
Safety and health at work for all people through prevention.*

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health

NIOSH is the primary federal agency responsible for conducting research and making recommendations for the prevention of work-related illness and injury. NIOSH is located in the Department of Health and Human Services in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The NIOSH mission is to provide national and world leadership to prevent work-related illness, injury, disability, and death by gathering information, conducting scientific research, and translating the knowledge gained into products and services. As part of its mission, NIOSH supports programs in every state to improve the health and safety of workers. NIOSH has developed this document to highlight recent NIOSH programs important to workers and employers in Maine.

The Burden of Occupational Illness and Injury in Maine

- In Maine, there are approximately 665,000 individuals employed in the workforce.¹
- In 2000, 26 workers died as a result of workplace injuries.²
- The agriculture, forestry, and fishing industry had the highest number of fatalities, followed second by the construction industry.²
- In 1999, the most recent year for which data are available, the rate of fatal workplace injuries was 5 deaths per 100,000 workers—above the national average rate of 4.5 deaths per 100,000 workers.²
- In 2000, there were 39,900 nonfatal workplace injuries and illnesses in Maine.³

The Cost of Occupational Injury and Illness in Maine

In 2000, the most recent year for which data are available, a total of \$252.3 million was paid for workers' compensation claims by Maine private insurers, self-insured employers, and state funds.⁴ This figure does not include compensation paid to workers employed by the federal government and also underestimates the total financial burden for private sector businesses, since only a fraction of health care costs and earnings lost through work injuries and illnesses is covered by workers' compensation. Chronic occupational illnesses like cancer are substantially under-reported in workers' compensation systems because work-relatedness is often difficult to establish.

How NIOSH Prevents Worker Injuries and Diseases in Maine

Health Hazard Evaluations (HHEs) and Technical Assistance

NIOSH evaluates workplace hazards and recommends solutions when requested by employers, workers, or state or federal agencies. Since 1993, NIOSH has responded to 21 requests for HHEs in Maine in a variety of industrial settings, including the following example:

Winslow, Maine: Vibration Related to Windshield Installation and Removal

In 1998, NIOSH received a management request from a windshield installation company to measure the vibrations of power tools used by workers removing and installing automotive windshields. Investigators found that the use of vibrating tools was associated with awkward postures of the arm, shoulder, and wrist. They recommended that workers do not use vibrating tools exclusively, that workers be trained to use hand tools, and that hand tools be provided as an alternative to vibrating tools.

Building State Capacity

State-Based Surveillance

NIOSH funds the Adult Blood Lead Epidemiology and Surveillance Program (ABLES) in the Maine Bureau of Health, Department of Human Services. Through ABLES, Department of Human Services staff track and respond to cases of excessive lead exposure in adults which can cause a variety of adverse health outcomes such as kidney or nervous system damage and potential infertility.

Undergraduate Training Program

NIOSH provides funds for the Center for Occupational Health and Safety at Central Maine Technical College. Established in 1988, the Center offers an associate degree, a certificate program, and continuing education. In fiscal year 2001, 22 students were enrolled and two students were graduated. Thirty-five short courses were provided to 679 participants.

Marine Safety Instructor Training (MSIT)

In fiscal year 2002, responding to a request from the state of Maine, NIOSH funded the Alaska Marine Safety Education Association (AMSEA) to conduct an MSIT course. AMSEA has developed a successful community outreach network in Alaska and the West Coast to bring required emergency drill instructor training to commercial fishers. The course was held at the Southern Maine Technical College in Portland. A total of 16 people participated, representing fishing groups, the Coast Guard, the University of Maine, the Maine Marine Patrol, high school technical programs, and a fisheries conservation non-profit agency. Some of the participants in the MSIT course have already co-instructed with experienced AMSEA instructors two additional courses for a total of 28 fishermen, one in Milbridge and another in Steuben, Maine.

Additional information regarding NIOSH services and activities can be accessed through the NIOSH home page at <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/homepage.html> or by calling the NIOSH 800-number at 1-800-356-NIOSH (1-800-356-4674).

¹U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), Local Area Unemployment Statistics, Current Population Survey, 2000.

²DOL, BLS in cooperation with state and federal agencies, Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries, 1999-2000.

³DOL, BLS in cooperation with participating state agencies, Survey of Occupational Injuries and Illnesses, 2000.

⁴National Academy of Social Insurance, *Workers' Compensation: Benefits, Coverage, and Costs, 2000 New Estimates*, May 2002.

